

FATHER JULES M. CONVERT, S. J.
CATHOLIC CHURCH
KALIAG, ALASKA 99748

SOCIETY OF JESUS - ALASKA
MISSION SUPERIOR

Rev. Fr. Provincial, S. J.
Portland

May 28, 1967

Dear Father Kelley,
P. X.

After praying and thinking your query (and Rome's) concerning Fr. Jacobson, it is my opinion that he probably cannot be considered. However, before going any further, such as sending for more informations from different sources, I wish to refer the case to your judgement.

First, I don't think he'd be suited for the job; he gives a strong impression of intellectual pride, loves to engage in endless discussions which very soon turn away from the original topic, and usually degenerate in pure dialectic. There is no doubt he seems to have an excellent mind, but for one I have the impression it stays very much on the surface, some kind of exterior brilliance that obscures whatever really lies underneath it all; this I have never been given a chance to really penetrate. Though I have seldom seen Father since he came back as a priest, I was his Superior in Holy Cross when he was a Scolastic, and he does not seem to have changed much since. At that time also, I had to remonstrate with him in several instances as he was spending a lot of time with the girls of the school who formed a kind of circle of admirers, even when his duties called him to be prefecting his boys; he always seemed to have time and talents to entertain the girls, but seldom used these same talents to keep his own charges happy. I know that this situation has frequently been repeated in our schools with other Scolastics as well; they are often overloaded with classes, prefecting and other duties... and quite naturally seem to look for their recreation in female companionship (girls and Volunteers).

However, there is another reason for my opinion, more serious I believe, and it is the reason for my asking your judgement before asking informations. Two years ago, when Father was on Nelson Island, very serious moral charges were made against him by the Village Council (so the thing was apparently widely circulated in the area); Bishop Gleeson wanted me to conduct an investigation, but I declined, since these accusations had been made to the Bishop himself, and I thought he should conduct whatever forum externum process was called for, without involving the Society, specially not the Superior who should only be presented with ascertained facts for his own action if called for. Although reluctantly, the Bishop had agreed, and sent Bishop Boileau. When he came back, he told me that charges of adultery and fornication had been made, and that the best he could make out was: Father had certainly been imprudent in dealing with women working for him in his house, sometime late evening. However he could not obtain very definite facts and he thought the whole thing had been built up thru personal grudges and gossips ('local politics'); it was the time when the village of Chefnak was divided between those who wanted to move to a new location and those who wanted to stay. On my recommendation, Father remained neutral in the

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discussion, only stating he would move the church too if all the people agreed on the move, otherwise he'd stay in Chefnak as long as the number of those who chose not to move justified his presence there. Some actually moved, to Tooksok Bay, the majority remaining at Chefnak. Now the charges came from those who had moved to Tooksok, and Bishop Boileau thought the different testimonies unclear and sometime contradictory so his final conclusion was Father's innocence, the charges being caused by jealousy and his too free attitude with women that was thus misinterpreted. One year ago, new charges of adultery were made, from Chefnak this time, by the husband of a woman who is judged really good and honest: I tried to go, but weather kept me indefinitely stuck in Bethel, and as there was no prospect of reaching the Island then as break-up was approaching, I came back home; moreover, Father was leaving for Outside very shortly. Now that charge had come to me thru the Bethel's State Magistrate, a good catholic woman who passed it on to me as she was reluctant to take any official action, and she said at the time that it was a fact known from a good many that Father had two children on the Island. Consulted, the Bishop decided to just drop this last case and move Father to St. Michael with a good admonition to watch his relationship with women: he apparently just took this new charge as a rebound of the old stories, by someone with a grudge. As a matter of fact, I don't think any investigation could possibly come to a certain conclusion one way or the other: I have watched a good many police investigations in our villages, and have come to the conclusion our people are not yet advanced enough to give impartial and true testimonies...

This would be my main reason to think Father could not be chosen for the position in the Diocese, by fear the old stories come back to life and travel all around, with no one really able to squash them once and for all. Please let me know if you wish to proceed further, or just drop the Rome's idea; you may if you wish make a copy of this letter to send as justification.

If Rome agrees that their candidate is unsuited, that will leave you to carry the ball at the Province level; we have no one else to propose from here. However I'd like to push the issue for Fr. Loyens; I still stand behind him; I think Rome is making too much of his actual tendency to abrupt judgements; This is only superficial and first reaction, and mostly in his personal field of professional knowledge where he excels; I have no doubt that with maturity coming from greater responsibilities and dealings with all kinds of people, the sharp corners of his personality would quickly erode. Also, while I can see the possible good he can accomplish in his special field, I believe that with his talents he could accomplish much more in the position proposed. Moreover there appears to be some contradiction in the letter from Rome, that refuses him by fear of his attitude toward the missionaries and the Mission Superior, while one of the reasons advanced in favor of Fr. J. is that he believes 'our officium esse cooperari cum Episcopo'...; if he was elevated there, what would be his own feeling about cooperation the other way?... The cold fact is that except Fr. Astruc, we have no one suitable here besides Lom, and as pointed in my letter to you, I have some reservation toward Rene's ability to communicate, though he is otherwise very well qualified. A possible compromise might be to call on Fr. Ed. Murphy of Boston; his background certainly prepares him well for such a position, and he should still be good for another ten to twelve years, which would give time to Lom to

mature some more, though by that time, he probably would have acquired too much of an intellectual propensity from being removed from actual give and take action: at the U. he is standing in the aura of his brilliance and actual certain knowledge; he'd be strictly a University man, and probably unsuited for anything else. I think he is a providential gift to Alaska and we should make use of him in the highest capacity.

I enclose a letter just received from Fr. Dibb, to give you more of an idea of how things are going in Anchorage; I hope Fr. General can soon give us the practical decisions we need as to the Society's status in the State, to avoid this criss-crossing of authority and decision-making lines, as in the case of the Archbishop asking you to provide a new man for Copper. Would you consider a Consultors' meeting in Fairbanks, sometime in July after Fr. Astruc is thru with his fishing, to help us settle at least some of our pending questions; Fairbanks (parishes and Residence), contract with the Bishop, the future of the Jesuit commitment to Copper, how to apply here the directives of the Congregation to our work when everything is in the hands of the Bishops and up to their wishes that so often don't take any account of the missionaries own thoughts and experience. Or, if you think it could serve a useful purpose, I could go down when Fr. Small shall be in the Province.

Concerning Fr. Llorente, things are quite decided for this year since he offered to stay on to relieve the pressure since I would not have anyone to take his place as Hospital Chaplain. However, Bishop Gleason might have something in mind which he did not share with me yet; last time I saw him, he accepted only to go over the immediate summer needs, stating that the more permanent status would be discussed later in the summer...which does not make it very easy for me to try to anticipate and plan; just moving from one crisis to another!

As you said in your last letter, many items have to be clarified...

All yours in Xto Jesu,

Jules M. Convert, S. J.
Superior, Alaska

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